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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
1 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

American Nightmares

AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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**For more information on THE STAND comics, visit: MARVEL.COM/COMICS/THE_STAND
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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND...

Someone at the Project Blue government facility in the Californian desert made a mistake. And now, the deadly flu-like virus "Captain Trips," which has a mortality rate in excess of 99 percent, has decimated most of the country's population.

The thus-far-uninfected are tasked with surviving in a world they no longer understand... Among the living:

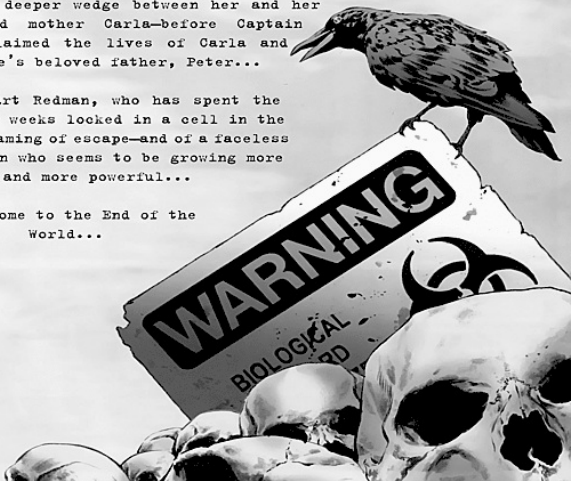
Nick Andros, the newly-crowned, deaf-mute deputy of Shoyo, Arkansas, who guards a jail full of dying criminals—the same men who once beat him to a pulp...

Larry Underwood, who fled L.A. for the safety of his mother's arms in New York City—and then had to comfort her as she succumbed to the flu ravaging her frail body...

Frannie Goldsmith, whose unexpected pregnancy drove a deeper wedge between her and her estranged mother Carla—before Captain Trips claimed the lives of Carla and Frannie's beloved father, Peter...

And Stuart Redman, who has spent the last few weeks locked in a cell in the CDC, dreaming of escape—and of a faceless boogeyman who seems to be growing more and more powerful...

Welcome to the End of the
World...



PROLOGUE
ARNETTE, TEXAS.



Dust blew across the Texas scrubland, and at twilight it made the town of Arnette seem like a sepia ghost-image.



Bill Hapscomb's Texaco sign had blown down and lay in the middle of the road.

On Main Street, soldiers lay dead in the gutter.



Cats were immune to the superflu, and dozens of them wove in and out of the stillness like smoky shades.



A faded and rusty wagon stood in the middle of Purgin Street in front of The Indian Head Tavern.



Someone had left the gas on in Norm Bruett's house, and a spark from the air-conditioner had blown the whole place sky-high.



On Logan Lane, in Arnette's best neighborhood, Tony Leominster's Scout stood in front of his house, its windows open.



The entire town was, except for the whisper and chirr of small animals and the tinkle of Tony Leominster's wind chimes, silent.



**SHOYO, ARKANSAS.
THE LATE SHERIFF BAKER'S JAIL**



He's dead,
ya friggin' mutie,
are you satisfied?
You feel revenged
yet? He's dead,
too!

Mike Childress was pointing at
Billy Warner, but the corpse
wasn't news to Nick.

He knew what he had to
do, too, but he wanted
to finish his lunch first.



I'm on a hunger strike!
Friggin' hunger strike! I
won't eat nothing till I'm
out! You'll eat my *dingle*
before I eat anything you
bring me, you friggin'
deaf-mute retard
ass--



Lunch was a mistake. The sick
smell coming off Billy's body was
making Nick's stomach do
cartwheels and handstands.



Let me out!
You keep me in
here, it's murder!
That's all it is,
cold-blooded
murder!

It took Nick ten minutes to
get the big man's remains
down the steep stairs to
the prison's cellar.



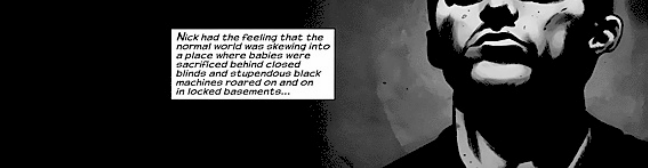
Panting, Nick laid what was left of Billy Warner next to Vince Hogan's corpse, on the concrete, under the fluorescent.



After Mrs. Baker's death, Nick had gone exploring, knocking on doors and ringing bells throughout Shoyo.

He was answered less than a dozen times, by sick but hopeful faces that would look out, see Nick, then shut their doors again.

Hope dead.



Nick had the feeling that the normal world was skewing into a place where babies were sacrificed behind closed blinds and stupendous black machines roared on and on in locked basements...



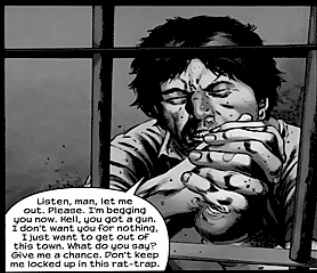
Two down and one to go! You're getting your revenge! Right? *Right?*



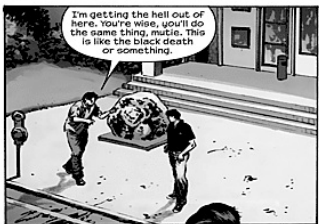
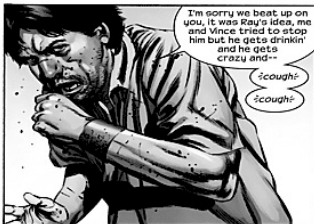
Well, I got the constitution of a brass eagle. And I think maybe I just got a mild case of it. I think I'll throw it off. You think that might be possible?



Listen, man, let me out. Please. I'm begging you now. Hell, you got a gun. I don't want you for nothing. I just want to get out of this town. What do you say? Give me a chance. Don't keep me locked up in this rat-trap.



OUTSIDE THE JAIL.



**NEW YORK CITY.
CENTRAL PARK.**

Larry Underwood's mother died three days ago.

He's been wandering ever since...

All of the animals in the Central Park Zoo were dead or sick. (Larry could hear the flies buzzing.) The lion, the zebra, and the antelope had died of starvation or thirst.

This monkey here, though, had a good case of the superflu. It would be dead in a matter of minutes.

A crazy old man was haunting the Park, shouting things like:

Monsters coming! Monsters on the way! They're in the suburbs!

Larry approached him, but the monster-shouter ran off in utter terror.

There were other people in the Park; Larry talked to a few of them.

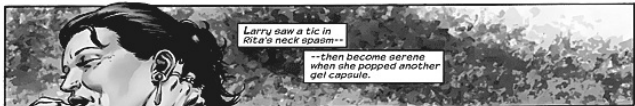
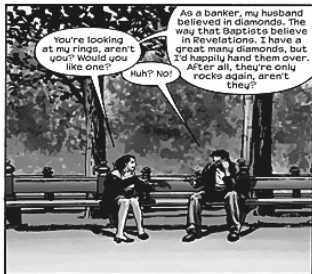
All their stories were pretty much the same. Their friends and relatives were dead or dying.

There had been shootings all over the island. Tiffany's had gone up in an inferno. Hordes of rats were coming up out of the subways.

Near the bandshell, Larry approached a woman dressed in expensive clothes, popping a pill into her mouth. She was maybe 50, but had taken pains to look younger.

Hi.
Uh, I'm not dangerous.







OGUNQUIT, MAINE.

There was a fly crawling
on Frannie Goldsmith's pie.

Her mother and father were both
dead. Carla Goldsmith had died in
the Sanford Hospital and Peter
Goldsmith had died upstairs, in his
bedroom, where his body still was.

He had taken sick after the town hall
meeting where it had been decided
that Ogunquit would be closed off
entirely. Anyone who tried to
get through would be shot dead--
any questions?

"Dead?" someone asked.
"You bet," someone else
answered.

That was--how many
days ago? Frannie's
mind wandered...

Flies,
pies, eyes,
dies...

Outside, it was a beautiful
summer's day, flawless, the
kind that the tourists came
to the Maine seacoast for.

Frannie could read
the thermometer
out the back window
and it hit her:



You can't keep a
corpse in the house,
not in high summer.

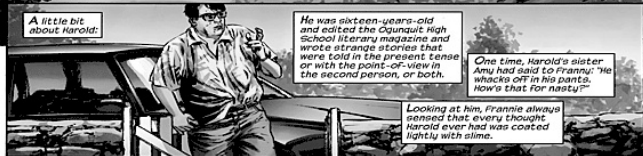
Who's
going to bury
Paddy?

The answer that came was
perfectly clear: She was, of
course. Who else?

It was 2:30--Frannie had been digging in the garden for a few hours--when a Cadillac pulled into her drive and Harold Lauder stepped out of it.



A little bit about Harold:



He was sixteen-years-old and edited the Ogunquit High School literary magazine and wrote strange stories that were told in the present tense or with the point-of-view in the second person, or both.

One time, Harold's sister Amy had said to Franny: "He whacks off in his pants. How's that for nasty?"

Looking at him, Frannie always sensed that every thought Harold ever had was coated lightly with slime.



Gay, Fran.

I'm canvassing the township. Not many resisting this dread disease, but I'd heard you were having some success on that front.

Fran could feel Harold's eyes crawling over her the way the fly had on her pie.

Hi, Harold.

I was awfully sorry to hear about Amy. Are your mother and father--?



I'm afraid so.

But life goes on, does it not?



How do you like my car?

It's Mr. Brannigan's, isn't it?



It was, but--

--why, whatever can you be doing, my child?



Frannie could take a lot of things, Lord knows, but not that. Not Harold Lauder feeling her up with his eyes and calling her "my child."

I am not your child, Harold. I am five years older than you. It is physically impossible for me to be your child.

And it's a grave, for my father.



Fran...

...in the garden?



Well, what would you suggest? That I put him in a coffin and drag him to the cemetery? What in the name of God for? He loved his garden! And what business is it of yours, anyway?



"Finish burying my father, of course."

Fran laid her mother's best tablecloth on the bed her parents shared all their married life.

As she rolled Peter onto his shroud, he let out a hideously long burp--

--that made Frannie sink to the floor. It was her father she was burying, and the very last of his humanity was the juicy, gassy smell that now hung in the air.

Some length of time later, Frannie removed Peter's pajamas and dressed him in his best suit and pinned his army medals to his lapel.

Then she folded the tablecloth over him and--with her mother's sewing kit--closed the seam.

Somehow, by taking lots of breaks, by ignoring the terrible aches in her neck and back, she managed to get her father's body downstairs and out into the garden.

It was quarter of nine when Fran finally fit the last sods of earth back into place, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

She was filthy and spent. Only the flesh around her eyes was white; they had been washed clean by her tears.

Inside her house, in the living room, Frannie sat down on the couch to kick off her sneakers and fell asleep instantly.

And dreamt...

In the dream, she climbed the stairs to her parents' bedroom again, to do her duty and see her father decently under ground.



But when she entered the room, it wasn't her father she found, it was something--someone--else.

Grimacing, but she couldn't see his face.

Though she could see the gift this terrible apparition had brought for her unborn baby:

A twisted, rusty coathanger.



Fran woke up briefly, in the three o'clock darkness of the living room and thought--

Him, it's him, the Walkin' Dude, the man with no face--

--before falling back asleep, almost immediately and, mercifully, dreamlessly this time.



The next morning, Fran didn't remember her dream, but when she thought of the baby in her belly, a feeling of fierce protectiveness swept over her all at once, frightening her with its depth and strength.



THE CDC IN VERMONT.
STUART REDMAN
IN HIS CELL.

From what Stu could see from his window the town of Stovington was completely deserted.

Like the man on the record said, "You don't need a weatherman to tell you which way the wind blows."

The same evening Larry slept with Rita, and Frannie slept alone, dreaming her terrible dream. Stu Redman waited up for Elder, the man with the revolver who accompanied the doctors and nurses whenever they came into Stu's cell.

He'd been waiting for two days now.

Stu supposed that Elder's final orders would be to kill him--and why not?

They had been unable to find a cure using him and he was a loose thread that knew all their secrets.

The nurses called Elder "Dr. Elder," but he was no doctor. He was a man waiting for orders, and there would be no reasoning or pleading with such a man.

It would happen the time Elder came alone, so that there wouldn't be any witnesses.

And that night, while Harold slept in his bed, dreaming of Frannie, Elder came...

...alone.

How are you feeling?

Stu could hear, in the nasal quality of Elder's voice, that he was sick.

You don't talk much, do you?
I like that in a man.

I just got the
word on you about
twenty minutes ago,
Mr. Redman. They're
not such hot orders,
but I think you'll
be--

CHRIST
JESUS!

That's a damn
rat, what kind of
place are you
running with
rats in it!

Rat?

CRACK!!

Stuart figured he'd have one
more good swing with the
chair before Elder recovered.

He made
it count.

Stu swung the chair
one last time...

...and then, finally,
Elder was still.

Outside his cell, in the anteroom, Stu found a thin stack of medical charts...and his clothes.



The cold finger of dread touched him. These things would have followed him into the crematorium, no doubt.

He would've become an un-person. So long, Stuart==

There was a noise behind him!



Don't move. Stop moving.



After that, his need to get out of there was so strong, Stu bolted, with barely enough time to think:

What if there are other men with guns between me and the outside world?

But there weren't. Only the corpses of doctors and nurses, silent sentinels.

The complex was much larger than he assumed, and Stu was running, up one flight of stairs, down another, twisting along corridors, panting, becoming convinced there was no way out.

The echo of his footsteps chased him, as if Elder had lived long enough to put a squad of ghostly MPs on his trail.

But then Stu rounded a corner, and started up a flight of stairs that ended at a door which read...

EXIT



Stu was halfway up the stairs when he felt a hand slip out of the darkness behind him and grasp his ankle.



Come down and eat chicken with me, beautiful...



it's sooooo dark...

The grinning thing held on, blood and bile trickling from the corners of its mouth.



Terrified, screaming, Stu kicked at the hand holding his ankle and then stomped it.



As he threw his shoulder against the door to the outside world, Stu heard a series of thudding crashes behind him.

Then he was
outside and
free.

A cool evening breeze
touched his face,
whispered in the pines.

Night had never
smelled as fragrant
sweet as this.

A crescent moon
rode the sky.

Stu turned up to it,
thankfully, and said:

I'm alive, thank
God I'm alive, thank
you, God, thank you,
God, thank you,
I'm alive...

And for the first time
since this whole mess
began, Stuart Redman
started to cry.

TO BE CONTINUED...

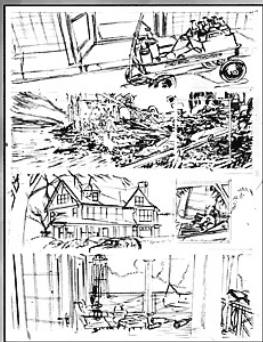
Lee Bermejo's issue #1 variant cover sketch.



Lee Bermejo's issue #1 variant cover pencil art.



Pencil Art by Mike Perkins.



The final art with inks by Perkins and colors by Laura Martin were seen previously in this issue.



MIKE PERKINS ON INKING

When I'm approaching a page of comic book artwork I want it to be seen individually as a piece of illustration as well as a working part of an encompassing whole--this is one of the reasons I will add the gray tones to a page instead of leaving those decisions to the colorist.

For me, the gray tones on a page provide an added layer of depth, texture or atmosphere to a scene and, depending on what kind of mood I am trying to portray, my tools vary. I primarily add the gray tones utilizing three types of medium:

Gray ink wash (usually used for landscape depth or a gradual tone employing various shades of gray). This approach also provides a very smooth surface--a flat tonal area; the equivalent of a dead-line weight. I will also use the gray ink wash with other materials if I'm looking for a uniform texture.

If we take a look at the Central Park scenes with Larry and Rita, the majority of the trees in the background are illustrated, almost abstractly, by taking advantage of the texture of an organic sponge--dipped in the ink and then pressed repeatedly onto the artwork.

With the dream sequence involving Frannie and Flagg a similar process is used -- but this time a harsher texture is appropriate--in this case an old terry-towel sock!

The final page of the issue needed a smoother texture for the night sky and for this I dipped a paper towel into the gray wash. The gradations are implemented one on top of the other by adding a little more black India ink between applications.

Along with the ink wash approach I will also use two differing gray pencils -- one smoother in application than the other, depending on the texture needed. The smoother "Col-erase" pencil is ideal for skin tones as well as background elements and subtle shadows. The beefier "Prismacolor" pencil is the perfect tool for getting gritty with the artwork and I've used it a lot in the prison scenes.

In addition to these other tools, I will also avail myself to the vagaries of the brush and employ an inker's trick known as "drybrush." This is the process by which the vast majority of the ink is dried on the brush and then the brush is swept over the appropriate part of the panel in order to provide a variation in texture. It can offer a lot of diversification for an artist if approached with confidence.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOWCASE THE ABOVE-MENTIONED TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY PERKINS IN ILLUSTRATING THE STAND.









Next: A Portrait of a Pyromaniac as a Young Man.
A.K.A. the secret origin of Trashy!



"If there's a more faithful literary adaptation out there, I've never seen it."

--Jesse Schedeen, IGN.COM



The end is nigh as a deadly plague sweeps the nation and widespread panic overcomes the dying masses of America in a terrifying and inexorable tide. Who will be left to rebuild on the ruins of their past lives as the ancient rivalry of Good vs. Evil has only just begun?

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale which begins at the end of the world.

PARENTAL ADVISORY
FOR STRONG LANGUAGE & CONTENT

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